



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PUBLIC COMMENTS REQUESTED ON SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is requesting public comments on a draft supplemental environmental impact statement concerning migratory bird hunting. The document is entitled, "Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Issuance of Annual Regulations Permitting the Sport Hunting of Migratory Birds (SEIS 87)". It updates a 1975 final environmental impact statement on migratory bird hunting.

About 5 million people hunt migratory birds in the United States each year, spending more than \$1 billion to hunt, according to the Service's 1985 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Fifty-eight species of migratory birds are hunted, including waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans, and brant); mourning doves and six other species of doves and pigeons; cranes; snipe; rails; gallinules; and coots.

The Service's 1975 environmental impact statement assessed the impacts of migratory bird hunting and considered alternatives to sport hunting, including no hunting. The 1987 supplemental statement provides more recent information on migratory bird populations and considers new approaches to hunting regulations.

The Fish and Wildlife Service issues regulations each year establishing migratory bird hunting seasons. The Service issues two types of regulations: "framework" regulations establishing season opening and closing dates, season lengths, bag limits, and shooting hours; and "special" regulations that are specific to species and geographic areas. Most special regulations are developed in response to requests from States for other special management needs.

For many years, migratory bird hunting regulations were adjusted annually in response to changes in the status of bird populations. In recent years, however, there has been interest in "stabilizing" hunting regulations so that hunters and businesses will know what regulations to expect from year to year, and government agencies can devote less time to establishing regulations and more to important research and management issues. Under stabilized regulations, the "framework" regulations remain unchanged for a specific period of years unless there are significant changes in migratory bird populations. In an experimental program, duck hunting regulations in the United States were stabilized from 1980-1984.

(more)

SEIS 87 proposes to continue to issue yearly regulations allowing sport hunting of migratory birds, and evaluates the environmental effects of six alternatives for regulating migratory bird hunting. These are:

1. Stabilized regulations with controlled use of special regulations. This is the preferred alternative. "Controlled use" of special regulations means that development of new special regulations and expansion of existing approaches would be subject to rigorous experimentation and evaluation. Unless they could be demonstrated to have no detrimental effect, they would not become part of the regular, annually established regulations. Use of existing special regulations would be reevaluated periodically.
2. Stabilized regulations with expanded use of special regulations. "Expanded use" of special regulations means that development of new special regulations and harvest strategies and expansion of existing approaches would continue as in recent years.
3. Stabilized regulations with reduced use of special regulations. "Reduced use" of special regulations means existing special regulations would be evaluated with the objective of eliminating those lacking a strong biological justification.
4. Annually adjusted regulations with expanded use of special regulations. This is the no change alternative.
5. Annually adjusted regulations with controlled use of special regulations.
6. Annually adjusted regulations with reduced use of special regulations.

Copies of the draft supplemental environmental impact statement may be obtained by writing to Director (FWS/MBM0), Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Room 536 Matomic Building, Washington, D.C., 20240. Written comments are requested by December 31, 1987, and should be sent to the same address.

Public hearings will be held at the following locations:

PLACE

TIME

Auditorium
Department of the Interior
18 & C Streets N.W.
Washington, D.C.

November 19, 9 a.m.
Contact: John Tautin 202/254-3207

The Stouffer Concourse Hotel
9801 Natural Bridge Road
St. Louis, Missouri

November 19, 7 p.m.
Contact: Stephen Lewis 612/725-3313

The Sheraton Hotel
360 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado

November 17, 7 p.m.
Contact: Julie Romero 303/236-8152

The Ramada Inn
1900 Canterbury Road
Sacramento, California

November 19, 7 p.m.
Contact: Richard Bauer 503/231-6164